
The Power of the Press

by Eugene V. Debs

Published in *The Toiler* [Cleveland], whole no. 107 (Feb. 20, 1920), pg. 1.

The power of the press is sadly underestimated in the socialist movement. The ruling class make no such mistakes. They are keenly alive to the power of the press in molding public sentiment and in shaping affairs in accordance with their interests. The capitalist papers do not suffer for the want of support and never die of starvation. They are fed fat and ungrudgingly by the class in power and in return serve that class with all their power.

Not so with the press of the working class. With scarcely an exception the papers and periodicals published in the interest of labor eke out a precarious existence. Ninety-five percent of them line the highway of the past with their skeletons. They lingered for a brief while and then gave up the ghost, falling victims to the chronic labor-paper malady, starvation.

Of course not all papers claiming to be labor papers are fit to exist. Many of them are fakes and run by political grafters. These often thrive in their blackmail and graft while an honest paper is allowed to die for the want of support.

Working men and women ought to have intelligence enough by this time to discriminate between an honest labor paper and a grafting sheet and they ought to be loyal enough to the working class to give their support to the paper that uses its influence

to mold sentiment in favor of their cause and fights their industrial and political battles.

It is when the strike comes that the working class suffer most keenly the lack of a powerful press that reaches the people. They are always at a fearful disadvantage on this account. The capitalists get in a thousand licks to their one, not only because they can get their case before the people in its most favorable light and keep it there, but because they can put the case of the workers in the most unfavorable light and keep it there.

If the working people had a press the slugging methods of corporations in a strike and the activities of their murderous gunmen would not only be impossible but unthinkable.

The working class can expect nothing from the press of the capitalist class but misrepresentation and injustice in the struggle for its rights. The working class must build up a powerful press of its own and this vital fact it cannot realize too soon.

Thousands of workers subscribe to the capitalist papers without contributing a penny to their own and this is one of the reasons why the working class is still in slavery and will remain so until it rises in its might and asserts and develops its power to achieve its emancipation.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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